

I support media diversity

Mr. Powell,

I am writing to you today to comment on Docket No. 02-277, The Biennial Review of the FCC's broadcast media ownership rules. In its goals to promote competition, diversity and localism in today's media market, I strongly believe that the FCC should retain all of the current media ownership rules now in question. These rules serve the public interest by limiting the market power of already huge companies in the broadcast industry.

I would like to speak to you about your responsibility. This responsibility is not to the media moguls. This responsibility is to the people of the United States. That is your job; and by refusing to gather public input, you are failing miserably.

The FCC grants lucrative television and radio broadcast licenses to transmit over the public airwaves. In return, the stations are expected to broadcast programming in the public interest.

Sen. Byron L. Dorgan (D-N.D.) cited a radio study that examined the nation's 44 top-rated stations over a week and found that they broadcast 312 hours of conservative talk programming, compared with 11 hours of liberal shows.

Dorgan pointed out that these stations are owned by only five companies, a fact he said demonstrates that fewer owners means less diversity of opinion. He asked Murdoch what he thought.

"Apparently, conservative talk radio is more popular," Murdoch replied.

Yes, they are more popular with Mr. Murdoch, as they support his agenda. But it is known that conservative talk shows are failing, and some stations need to be paid to take the programs. This is not anything close to "public interest."

I would also like to use one of your quotes, in context. Please note that most Americans are asking for no change, which would not require "crafting of ownership laws that stand up in court" that do not already exist. Only the media moguls are asking for that.

In a Washington Post article Powell said while he values public input on the rules, it ultimately will be of little help in crafting ownership laws that stand up in court.

"You don't govern just by polls and surveys," he said. "We have to exercise difficult judgments and abide by the law. If all of our rulemaking was just a case of put them out and take a referendum, things would be a lot easier."

Remember, your job is to regulate the PUBLIC airwaves. You would be wise to find out what the public wants to do with them. Here is a sampling:

In recent days, the FCC has been inundated with hundreds of thousands of e-mails and e-petitions. MoveOn.org, a public-interest organization founded by two Silicon Valley entrepreneurs, says it has collected 170,000 signatures on a petition to the FCC, urging the agency to keep the rules in place.

The group is joining forces with the public-interest group Common Cause, and this week it launched a 50,000 newspaper and television advertising campaign against the changes, including ads in the New York Times and The Washington Post.

Members of the National Rifle Association have sent 300,000 postcards demanding the same.

Notice the diversity of the groups. I would have never expected to find the NRA and Common Cause fighting for the same issue.

Yet you insist on ignoring public input. Why? This was on Alternet:

"The Center for Public Integrity has a stunning study out on the concentration of ownership in telecommunications. The even more stunning news is that the Federal Communications Commission, which theoretically represents you and me, is about to make all of it even worse. And behind this betrayal of the public trust is nothing but rotten, old-fashioned corruption. It's the old free-trip-to-Vegas ploy, on a grand scale."

"The Public Integrity people examined the travel records of FCC employees and found that they have accepted 2,500 trips, costing nearly .8 million over the past eight years, paid for by the telecommunications and broadcast industries, which are, theoretically, "regulated" by the FCC. The industry-paid travel is on top of about million a year in official travel paid for by taxpayers."

"According to the center, FCC commissioners and agency staffers attended hundreds of conventions, conferences and other events all over the world, including Paris, Hong Kong and Rio de Janeiro. They were put up at luxury hotels such as the Bellagio in Las Vegas and ferried about by limo. Vegas was the top destination - 330 trips - New Orleans second with 173, then New York at 102 and London with 98 trips. Why London, you may ask. Well, do ask. "

Just in case you have a shred of integrity, let me leave you with a quote from one of our founding fathers:

"If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, it expects what never was and never will be...

The people cannot be safe without information.

When the press is free and every man can read, all is safe"